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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000502

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ZI](#) [SF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MDC](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)

SUBJECT: FRAUDULENT LANDSLIDE "WIN" FOR ZANU-PF

REF: HARARE 501 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher W. Dell  
Reason 1.4(b)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Nearly complete results show ZANU-PF cruising to an overwhelming win in Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections amid mounting (and credible) allegations of fraud by the MDC and civil society. With five seats remaining to be announced, ZANU-PF has taken 74 and the MDC 40, with one independent also winning. Evidence of electoral fraud is growing, but specific evidence is unlikely to come in from the field until next week. Next steps for the MDC and civil society are uncertain. The MDC party leadership is apparently leaning toward a conservative approach in confronting the government, although senior leaders are meeting the afternoon of April 2 to discuss other options. As expected, the SADC and South African Government observer missions have blessed the poll. End Summary.

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MDC ROBBED AGAIN  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Zimbabwe Electoral Commission results as of 1300 local time show that ZANU-PF candidates have won 74 seats nationwide and the MDC 40. Former Information Minister turned independent candidate Jonathan Moyo won the Matabeleland North seat of Tsholotsho. Five seats have not yet been announced -- four ZANU-PF held seats around Gokwe in Midlands, and the MDC seat of Binga in Matabeleland South. Curiously, the state-owned Herald newspaper announced in its morning edition that ZANU-PF had taken 81 seats to 38 for the MDC. A contact at the Japanese Embassy told Emboffs that the Zimbabwean Embassy in Tokyo had relayed their Foreign Ministry those numbers last night. The percentage of the vote count nationwide runs 59 percent for ZANU-PF and 40 percent for the MDC, as compared to roughly 48 percent a piece in the badly tainted 2000 elections.

[1](#)3. (SBU) An analysis of the results shows a crushing defeat for the opposition, particularly outside its urban bastions. Should they win Binga but lose the four Gokwe seats (a likely result), they will have lost 16 seats from their 2000 total of 57. More significantly, the party will have been denied every rural constituency outside of Matabeleland. MDC candidates won only one seat in the three ZANU-PF-dominated Mashonaland provinces, a peri-urban seat, seldom garnering more than a third of the vote. Most disappointingly, the party performed poorly in Masvingo and Manicaland provinces, where they considered many seats up for grabs. Furthermore, several senior party incumbents lost their seats, including Evelyn Masaiti, Renson Gasela, and Paul Themba Nyathi.

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FRAUD ALLEGATIONS MOUNTING  
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[1](#)4. (C) As disappointing as the election results are to the MDC what may be worse is how they lost. This will mark the third election in a row that ZANU-PF has stolen. Allegations of electoral misconduct continue to mount, both from the MDC and the independent Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN). An American consultant who has been working with ZESN told us that the network is likely to make a statement soon about the conduct of the polls, which will likely emphasize the exceedingly unlevel playing field, the high number of rejected voters (noted in Reftel), and in particular the opacity of the tabulation process.

[1](#)5. (C) Early analysis seems to indicate that a great many rejected voters were either young (youth heavily supports the MDC) or lived in MDC-controlled areas. In seven constituencies thus far, the number of rejected voters is higher than the margin of victory. The American consultant said the opacity of the tabulation process appears to have been a deliberate attempt by ZEC and the government to prevent any sort of parallel vote count from emerging, as well as the vehicle for manipulating the official data. Contrary to provisions of the Electoral Act, relatively few polling stations posted their numbers after the counting was complete. In addition, many observers were not allowed to

leave their polling stations until very early Friday morning, after the official results had been announced, and were not allowed to phone in their observations. Finally, Embassy observers have heard several reports of MDC polling agents not being allowed to witness the count, and some within the MDC believe there may have been ballot stuffing at these stations.

16. (C) As reported reftel, in several constituencies, such as Manyame, there were turnout numbers announced by the ZEC Thursday evening that were much lower than those announced on Friday. Shifting the tabulation paradigm from "flawed" to "fraudulent," however, may prove difficult for both ZESN and the MDC, absent their own parallel vote counts. ZEC has been slow to release their final results by polling station, but neither organization has been able to take advantage and counter with their own figures. In coming days, we expect the MDC to produce figures to back up their claims, possibly pointing to landslide ZANU-PF results at stations where their agents were not allowed to witness the count. However, the delay in getting this information to the public could prove fatal to their efforts to spark public outrage.

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NEXT STEPS FOR MDC UNCLEAR  
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17. (C) Senior MDC leaders are meeting at the moment to discuss the party's next steps in the wake of the result. David Coltart, a reelected MP and senior party official, told Emboffs in Bulawayo that the senior leadership is leaning toward a "conservative" approach to confronting the regime, and he noted that some party structures -- and youth in particular -- have been held back from protesting by MDC leadership. It is unclear, however, what options the party has at its disposal. Tsvangirai at his press conference yesterday ruled out a legalistic approach, but also declined to call for mass action. It appears their "Plan B" was not well thought out in advance and that by default the party may have to regroup and start planning for 2008, an approach that could bring Tsvangirai's leadership into question.

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REGIONAL OBSERVERS ISSUE GLOWING REPORTS  
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18. (SBU) As expected, regional observer delegations have so far blessed the poll result. Head of the SAG delegation, Labor Minister Membathisi Mdladlana, gave a press conference this morning at which he stated that the results reflected the will of the people and praised the conduct of the polls. The preliminary SADC statement, issued yesterday, also blessed the polls, although it did note with concern the large numbers of rejected voters and other opposition concerns.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) Although many more allegations, facts, and figures are likely to keep coming in for several days, it is clear that the MDC has again been defrauded in a badly tainted election and will have few good options to reclama the result. In fact, it appears that ZANU-PF cheating in this election was on an even greater scale than in 2000. In any event, they survived and will remain for the time being the strongest opposition voice. At this point, the focus must move to the future, particularly preparing for local council elections next year and ultimately the presidential poll in 2008. One lesson learned from this election is the importance of a parallel vote count.

110. (C) For its part, ZANU-PF's strategy was apparently to create ballot stuffing and to rely on fraud at higher levels in the opaque tabulation process. This enabled them, with the active connivance of the police, to create an orderly, calm, transparent process at the polls on voting day. The dirty tricks took place out of sight in the back room operation and in the years and months before the campaign began.

111. (C) We will be assessing the lessons of this poll in more detail later, but it is already clear that the limited capacity of ZESN and the MDC to effectively counter ZEC figures has drastically limited their ability to challenge the legitimacy of the poll. Preparing polling agents and observers for 2006 and 2008 is a process that must start immediately, and with sufficient funding, so that the same situation does not happen again.

Dell